

WOLF ASKS FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION TO CANCEL 'TECHWAY' STUDY

Washington, D.C. – Tenth District Congressman Frank Wolf today released the following statement concerning the Federal Highway Administration's current study of a new Potomac River crossing:

"Today, I asked the Federal Highway Administration to cancel the study presently being conducted to determine the feasibility of building a new bridge across the Potomac River north of the American Legion Bridge.

"My sole motivation in securing federal funding for the study was based on my desire to relieve congestion on our region's highways. What started out as an idea to help has now brought grief and anxiety. That was never my intention. The study process today has taken a direction, gone to a level of detail and moved beyond anything I ever envisioned. What started out as an idea to build consensus to improve the lives of area commuters, and to give the people facts to make an informed decision, has now turned into a process that is frankly out of control.

"I am disappointed with the direction this process has taken, and I know there will be people who are disappointed with my decision to call for an end to the study. But I want to be clear: I have reached my decision after hearing from and talking to my constituents. It is my decision and mine alone. It was a difficult decision and I understand the impact it will have. Nevertheless, I have come to the conclusion that it would be very difficult, if not impossible to build a new bridge without negatively impacting established neighborhoods or cutting through parkland.

"I thought perhaps there was still enough open space on both sides of the river that a new bridge could be built to help relieve traffic congestion in the region and link the burgeoning high tech community in the Dulles corridor with the bio-tech community in the I-270 corridor. But according to a preliminary analysis by the Federal Highway Administration – the independent body conducting the study – that does not appear to be the case.

"I am sympathetic to homeowners in both Virginia and Maryland who in recent weeks have grown exceedingly concerned about the study as numerous "proposed" routes have begun to appear on flyers at public hearings and on the Internet. While none of these 'proposed' routes were ever recommended by the Federal Highway Administration, I understand the anxiety they have created.

"I also understand the long-term implications that these 'proposed' routes could have on property values. This is one of my main reasons for asking the Federal Highway Administration to end the study now. It is not fair for homeowners or property owners to have a cloud hanging over their houses or land. The longer the study proceeds, and the more erroneous information is circulated in the community, the greater the chance that someone would have difficulty selling his or her home. Quite frankly, I am extremely disappointed about the amount of disinformation that has been circulated about the study.

“We must, however, do something about traffic congestion in the Washington Metropolitan area. Traffic has become a quality of life issue. We all spend way too much time sitting in it. All you have to do is listen to the radio traffic reports to know this.

“I sit in traffic every morning and every evening. I often tell people that I conduct a daily field hearing on traffic congestion. Some mornings it takes me longer to get to my office on Capitol Hill than to my district office in Winchester, which is twice as far away. Being the fourth most congested region in the country is nothing to boast about.

“According to a recent story in U.S. News and World Report, the average driver now spends the equivalent of a full work week each year stuck in traffic. The time wasted every day by the hardworking mothers and fathers in our region could be better spent with their families, coaching Little League or singing in the church choir. A recent study by a Harvard professor shows that for every 10 minutes spent driving to work, involvement in community affairs drops by 10 percent.

“Over the years, my office has been involved in alleviating a number of transportation problems in the region. Among them:

- ❖ Getting full funding to complete the original Metro rail system;**
- ❖ Obtaining \$92 million to begin rapid bus transit in the Dulles Corridor as a prelude to rail;**
- ❖ Lowering car pool restrictions on Route 66;**
- ❖ Adding a new reversible lane on the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge;**
- ❖ Improving safety and driving conditions on the George Washington Memorial Parkway, including the additional lane from Spout Run to the Roosevelt Bridge;**
- ❖ Getting major improvements on Route 15 north of Leesburg following a number of fatalities on the road, including banning tandem trucks;**
- ❖ Assisting in the effort to ban trucks on Route 17 from I-66 to U.S. Route 50 in Fauquier County;**
- ❖ Leading the effort in Congress to improve truck safety on our nation’s highways;**
- ❖ Obtaining funds for park and ride lots along the Dulles Corridor; and**
- ❖ Advocating telecommuting in both the private sector and the federal government.**

“Working to improve the quality of life for my constituents – and the hundreds of thousands of others who live and work in the Washington Metropolitan area – will continue to be my top priority. I have always supported a balanced approach to transportation, including mass transit and alternatives such as telecommuting.

“We must continue to focus our attention and energy on ways to help our families, our friends, and our neighbors spend less time sitting in traffic and more time doing things that they enjoy. I believe every one in our region working together must reach a consensus as to what can be done to solve our congestion problems, including having the commitment to make the improvements and coming up with a way to pay for them. Until this is done, conditions only will worsen.

“In closing, I want to thank the Federal Highway Administration for the effort and energy they have already put into this study. My decision to end the study is no way a reflection on the work they have done.”